



# MAINE

***“I’ve seen shorebirds, egrets, ducks, and hawks that I’ve never observed before on the Sprague River saltmarsh. There are mummichogs\* in the waters of the high marsh for the first time since the marsh was ditched 50 years ago.”***

Judy Marden, Director of the Bates Morse-Mountain Conservation Area in Phippsburg, Maine made these comments after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restored 61 acres of degraded wetlands on property owned by Bates College.

*\* mummichog - a small fish that is very important to the saltmarsh food web.*



**Shorebirds, wading birds, waterfowl, and other fish and wildlife resources benefit from saltmarsh restoration.**

## Introduction and General Description

The Service’s Partners For Fish and Wildlife Program provides technical advice, funding, and construction assistance to private landowners and Native American Tribes to restore and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Begun in 1990 to help farmers restore degraded wetlands for wildlife, the Partners Program continues to grow as more opportunities are found to restore wetland, riverine, and upland habitats.

In Maine, over 200 landowners, including farmers and private conservation groups, have requested assistance from the Service’s Partners For Fish and Wildlife Program to restore habitat on private lands. Judy Marden and others, are leaving a legacy of stewardship for future generations by making the lands they own or manage a better place for fish and wildlife.

## Maine Partners Program Activities

- Freshwater restoration
- Saltmarsh restoration
- Fishway construction
- Riparian restoration
- Grassland restoration
- Forest stewardship
- Assist Native American Tribes in managing their wetlands and woodlands
- Farm Bill Conservation Provisions

## Habitats of Special Concern

### ***Wetlands***

Wetland restoration continues to be a high priority of the Partners Program in Maine. Nearly a dozen migratory bird species of special management concern inhabit wetlands in the State. Northern harriers, sedge wrens, American bitterns, pied-billed grebes, olive-sided flycatchers, and black ducks

are examples of declining bird species that directly benefit from the Partners Program in Maine.

## Threats

Although wetland losses in Maine are relatively small compared to losses that have occurred in midwestern States, wetlands continue to be filled or severely degraded by development, particularly in southern and central Maine. Conversion of prime farmland to residential home development and farmland abandonment contribute to grassland losses in Maine. Consequently, grassland birds, such as bobolinks, grasshopper sparrow (State endangered) and meadowlarks, are declining faster than any other group of birds in the Northeast.

### ***Streams and Rivers***

Water quality degradation continues to plague Maine rivers and streams, impacting Atlantic salmon (federally endangered),

yellow lampmussel (State threatened), and other aquatic resources. Dams on rivers and streams and undersized culverts on tidal creeks prevent/limit anadromous fish runs. Roads and undersized culverts on salt marshes impair tidal circulation, encouraging the establishment of invasive plants such as phragmites (a very tall grass) and purple loosestrife.

The Partners Program in Maine has worked voluntarily with 30 landowners to restore degraded emergent wetlands and saltmarshes to improve habitat for many Federal trust species, including waterfowl, shorebirds, and wading birds.

## **Conservation Strategies**

### ***Wetland Conservation, with special emphasis on Native American Lands***

To help offset the annual loss of hundreds of acres of wetlands in Maine, the Partners Program is partnering with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Penobscot Indian Nation, and the Passamaquoddy Tribe to prevent hundreds of acres of beaver-influenced wetlands from being drained by private



**Beaver enclosures help maintain diverse wildlife habitat by preventing the complete drainage of wetlands by road crews.**

landowners and town road crews. The Partners Program constructed beaver enclosure devices to protect roads and wetlands. (The beaver enclosure devices prevent a beaver pond from getting too large.) These wetlands, often the last remaining “open” spaces in urban environments, act as wildlife magnets, attracting bitterns, rails, green herons, moose, ducks, and songbirds.

The costs of beaver enclosure work averages \$20 per acre. Restoring wetlands that have been



**Olive-sided flycatchers, and other seriously declining migratory birds, inhabit wetlands protected by beaver enclosures.**

ditched and drained is another important part of the Partners Program. The average cost of restoring ditched wetlands on farms averages \$500 to \$1000 per acre in Maine.

The Partners Program is working cooperatively with Bates College, The Nature Conservancy, and other partners to restore hydrology to portions of a 300-acre saltmarsh near Phippsburg, Maine. Saltmarsh restoration averages \$2,000 and up per acre.

The Houlton Band of Maliseet is restoring riparian corridors along their lands next to the Meduxnekeag River with financial and technical assistance from the Partners Program. The costs associated with purchasing and

planting native trees, averages about \$4,000 per mile.

### ***Grasslands***

The Partners Program in Maine is working cooperatively with landowners to restore hundreds of acres of grassland habitat for declining grassland birds on the Kennebunk Plains and elsewhere in Maine. Grassland restoration costs range from \$20 to \$250 per acre, depending on prescriptions and site preparations.

### ***State and Federally Listed Species***

The Partners Program is working closely with farmers and land trusts to improve water quality in the Ducktrap, Sheepscot, Kennebec, Kenduskeag, and other federally-endangered Atlantic salmon rivers



**Upland sandpipers, a State threatened species, benefit from Partners Program grassland restoration projects.**

that are also home to State threatened mussels and rare dragonflies and damselflies.

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Gravel pit restoration in riparian areas and streambank fencing on dairy farms are two conservation steps being taken to improve water quality for fish and wildlife.



**The Partners Program works voluntarily with dairy farmers and other private landowners to restore degraded habitat.**

Federally threatened Canada lynx populations on Passamaquoddy Tribal lands have benefitted from the Partners Program's recommendations to Tribal foresters, particularly the management of early successional stage coniferous forests.

### ***Fish Passage***

The Partners Program has worked voluntarily with Champion Paper Company to improve fish passage on the Orland River by installing a fishway for alewives, and other anadromous (migratory) fishes that are economically and environmentally important to local communities.



**Partners Program funds are used to help construct fishways for alewives and other migratory fishes.**

Fishways can cost \$100,000 and up, per facility. The Partners Program contribution to the Orland project was \$20,000, or 20 percent of the actual cost.

### ***Farm Bill Conservation Provisions***

The Partners Program in Maine works most effectively by "piggy-backing" its dollars with partners sharing similar conservation missions. By working closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, other FWS offices, State agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners, the Partners Program is able to "stretch" its funds to accomplish habitat restoration.

Most notably, as a member of USDA State Technical Committee, the Partners Program plays a significant role in deciding how best to allocate funds for USDA conservation programs (i.e., the Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program) designed to assist farmers in restoring, enhancing, and protecting fish and wildlife habitat on their own lands. Additionally, as a member of an interagency Easement Review Team, the Partners Program plays an important role in setting aside conservation areas through the Farm Service Agency's Debt-For-Nature and Inventory Property programs.

The Partners Program worked with the Farm Service Agency's Debt-For-Nature Program to protect Furbish lousewort (a federally endangered plant species) populations on the St. John River in northern Maine.

### ***Public Outreach***

Partners Program staff attend Maine Cooperative Extension Service evening meetings with farmers and other landowners to inform the public of federal programs available to assist landowners interested fish and wildlife resources in Maine. We also work closely with public libraries, schools and scouting groups by leading field trips for youngsters interested in learning about wetland restoration and migratory birds. The Partners Program has been featured in Maine Public Radio broadcasts and on numerous local radio stations to help educate the public about the work of the Partners Program and the Service.



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## Partners

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Penobscot Indian Nation  
Passamaquoddy Tribe  
Houlton Band of Maliseet  
Aroostook Band of Micmac  
Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
Bates College  
The Nature Conservancy - Maine Chapter  
Ducks Unlimited  
Trout Unlimited  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Coastal Mountains Land Trust  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Champion Paper Company  
Kittery Land Trust  
Maine Coast Heritage Trust  
Farm Service Agency  
Clayton Lake Woodlands, Inc.  
Aroostook County Soil and Water Conservation  
Districts (3)  
Waldo County SWCD  
Kennebec County SWCD  
Lincoln County SWCD  
Maine Dept. of Environmental Protection  
Georges River Land Trust  
Ducktrap River Coalition  
Coastal Conservation Association  
Phippsburg Land Trust  
Maine Audubon Society  
Boy Scouts of America  
Bangor Public Library  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Partners In Flight - Maine Chapter  
Other USFWS offices in Maine



**Introducing youngsters to the wonders of a restored wetland is an important component of the Partners Program Public Outreach effort.**

- T 180 acres of saltmarsh restored
- T 550 acres of upland restored
- T 33 miles of river habitat opened up for anadromous fishes
- T 130 acres of ditched, emergent wetlands restored
- T 9,500 acres of freshwater wetlands protected from drainage by installing 500 beaver exclosures (includes wetlands owned by the Penobscots, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet Indians)
- T 6 miles of Atlantic salmon river habitat fenced to prohibit livestock from degrading water quality

### **Partners Program and USDA Conservation Programs**

- T 2,234 acres of wetlands in perpetual conservation easement status, managed by USFWS
- T 7,325 acres of wetlands and uplands enrolled in 50-year conservation contracts
- T 25,000 acres of grassland enrolled in CRP
- T 1,500 acres of grasslands enrolled in WHIP

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## Accomplishments

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### **Partners Program Habitat Restoration**

- T Developed close working relationships with four Native American Tribes who collectively own 230,000 acres in Maine
  - T Partnerships formed with over 30 organizations
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## Future Needs

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- < Assist Native American Tribes, with identification of fish and wildlife restoration opportunities, funding, and implementation of habitat projects on Tribal lands.
- < Restore or maintain hundreds of acres of beaver-influenced wetlands.
- < Locate and replace undersized culverts on tidal creeks to restore or improve tidal circulation to hundreds of acres of saltmarshes.
- < Install fishways and streambank fences to improve water quality and anadromous fish runs on hundreds of miles of river in the Penobscot, Sheepscot, Ducktrap, Kennebec, Narraguagus, Dennys, and other focus river watersheds.
- < Maine has lost over 1.26 million acres of wetland since European settlement. Many of those acres could be restored through the voluntary efforts of private landowners.
- < Restore several thousand acres of native grasslands.



**Three hundred dollars from the Partners Program in Maine funded the construction of a beaver enclosure device that prevented the draining of this 200-acre wetland on Native American lands.**

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## CONTACT

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